What is claimed is:

1.   A programmable device comprising a computer readable medium storing programming code for controlling the device to perform processing comprising:

storing program metadata that includes timing and descriptive data for television programs and segment metadata that includes timing and descriptive data for individual segments of television programs;

in response to a command, presenting a user interface that displays characteristics represented in the metadata of a program or segment;

receiving user selections with respect to the displayed characteristics; and

updating viewer preferences in accordance with the user selections.

2.   The device claimed in claim 1, wherein the program or segment for which characteristics are displayed is a currently viewed program

3.   The device claimed in claim 1, wherein the program or segment for which characteristics are displayed is a currently viewed segment.

4.   The device claimed in claim 1, wherein the characteristics comprise at least one of categories and key words.

5.   A method in a programmable device, comprising :

storing program metadata that includes timing and descriptive data for television programs and segment metadata that includes timing and descriptive data for individual segments of television programs;

in response to a command, presenting a user interface that displays characteristics represented in the metadata of a program or segment;

receiving user selections with respect to the displayed characteristics; and

updating viewer preferences in accordance with the user selections.

6.   A method in a programmable device, comprising:

storing program metadata that includes timing and descriptive data for television programs and segment metadata that includes timing and descriptive data for individual segments of television programs; and

in response to a command, updating viewer preferences stored by the device in accordance with segment characteristics represented in the segment metadata of a currently viewed segment.

7.   A programmable device comprising a computer readable medium storing programming code for controlling the device to perform processing comprising:

storing program metadata that includes timing and descriptive data for television programs and segment metadata that includes timing and descriptive data for individual segments of television programs;

in response to a command, presenting a user interface that displays characteristics represented in the metadata of a segment or program;

receiving user selections with respect to the displayed characteristics; and

identifying and displaying to the user additional segments and programs having characteristics in common with the selected characteristics.

8.   The device claimed in claim 7, wherein the program or segment for which characteristics are displayed is a currently viewed program

9.   The device claimed in claim 7, wherein the program or segment for which characteristics are displayed is a currently viewed segment.

10.   The method claimed in claim 7, wherein the characteristics comprise at least one of categories and key words.

11.   A method in a programmable device, comprising:

storing program metadata that includes timing and descriptive data for television programs and segment metadata that includes timing and descriptive data for individual segments of television programs;

in response to a command, presenting a user interface that displays characteristics represented in the metadata of a segment or program;

receiving user selections with respect to the displayed characteristics; and

identifying and displaying to the user additional segments and programs having characteristics in common with the selected characteristics.

12.   A method in a programmable device, comprising:

storing program metadata that includes timing and descriptive data for television programs and segment metadata that includes timing and descriptive data for individual segments of television programs;

in response to a command, identifying and displaying to the user additional segments and programs having characteristics in common with characteristics represented in the segment metadata of a currently viewed segment.

13.   A method in a video receiver device, comprising:

storing program metadata that includes timing and descriptive data for television programs and segment metadata that includes timing and descriptive data for individual segments of television programs;

monitoring viewing of programs and individual program segments; and

producing viewing habit data from said stored metadata, the viewing habit data indicating the programs and individual program segments viewed.

14.   The method claimed in claim 13, wherein the viewing habit data further indicates programs and individual program segments recorded.

15.   The method claimed in claim 13, wherein the viewing habit data further indicates recorded programs and program segments viewed.

16.   The method claimed in claim 13, wherein the method further comprises reporting the viewing habit data to an external system.

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